Student Development Lasts All Four Years

The first year of college is one of great change and growth, with students experiencing a new home, newfound independence, new friends, new challenges, and new interests. All of these novel experiences are met with a range of emotions including excitement, nervousness, fear, and success.

But, it doesn’t stop there. The transformation of your student continues and changes throughout his or her college career, and the challenges and opportunities vary depending upon your student’s year in school. It is very common for sophomores, in particular, to be changing their goals and questioning their plans. Juniors may be more focused on academic-track planning, as well as study-abroad possibilities (see page 2).

The Parent Program recently asked a group of campus experts about the most common issues facing sophomores and upperclass students.

Given its location between the excitement and newness of the first-year of college and the more focused experience of the junior and senior years, many find sophomore year to be marked by considerable questioning of personal, academic, and career-related goals and aspirations, says Dean of Students Lori Berquam. It’s not uncommon for students to wonder if Madison is the right place for them or even why they are at the university at all. “What does it all mean?” may cross a sophomore’s mind more than once.

The adage that “change is the only constant in life” could have originated with sophomores in mind. Completing a full year of college often opens the possibility for students to look deeper and question goals or majors. Doing so is normal and healthy.

“It is a year of transitions and, for some, dislocation,” Berquam says. “Many students state that they feel at sea or a bit off-center. This complex of feelings and experiences is often referred to as the ‘sophomore slump.’”

Sophomores should consider narrowing their interests or studying one of them more in depth; meeting with advisors in the majors that they’re considering; continuing an assessment of skills, strengths, and interests; and exploring connections between interests, strengths, and potential careers.

Details typically begin to come together during junior year. Students are charting their courses for the next two years and the end is in sight. Juniors tend to be more aware and focused on the end result. They are applying and interviewing for internships in their chosen areas of study and many are studying abroad.

This is the time for self-reflection and for asking, “What haven’t I done that I want to do before I graduate?” Students should be checking in with their advisors regularly to ensure that their plans match their intentions upon graduation. Work and internships may be a portion of their university academic load at this point.

Steve Schroeder, director of the School of Business Career Center, says, “Leadership and involvement should continue to be woven into a student’s academics and out-of-the-classroom activities, as employers want to hire students with demonstrated leadership experiences.”

The onset of senior year often engenders mixed feelings. While very familiar with campus and student life, students are making preparations for next steps and for leaving an environment where they are comfortable. They have been students for sixteen or more years, and the thought of doing something else can be scary.

Seniors are busy completing academic requirements while also searching for jobs. The ideal situation for any graduating senior is receiving a full-time job offer before graduation. Anxiety about entering the workforce is very common, and the current economic climate puts extra stress on students as they worry about being significantly underemployed or unemployed when they graduate.

Remember that change is stressful. “It’s what people say to themselves about change that will determine how well they react to it,” says Rob Sepich, a counselor at University Health Services. He advises students to not focus too much on things that are out of their control.

“If they look at change as a challenge or an adventure—they will do much better,” he says.

Sophomore through senior years at UW–Madison can be extremely rewarding and productive, says Berquam. Parents can help ensure a successful journey during all of the college years by being supportive of their student’s choices, coaching him or her through challenges, and allowing him or her to take responsible risks.
Anyone watching the news these days knows that we’re living in a world of global challenges that will require global solutions.

More and more, those who successfully navigate that world after college are students who gained confidence, experienced new situations, and were immersed in other cultures by studying abroad.

The value of learning a different language or studying overseas no longer applies only to liberal-arts majors. All students—whether studying engineering, health care, agriculture, or other fields—need to acquire an essential set of skills, attitudes, and knowledge to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world. These skills are equally important for students who graduate and take jobs close to home.

“[Companies] want their workforce to be cognizant and respectful of other cultures,” says Mary Regel, director of the Bureau of International Development in Wisconsin’s Department of Commerce. “It’s a rare company these days that doesn’t have some interaction with other cultures.”

But as international outlooks and skills have become increasingly important for both personal growth and career planning, UW–Madison—and with other universities—has struggled with how to evaluate a student’s progress. Last year, a university task force set about defining the end result: a concept known as global competence.

Task force members identified the components or “competencies” that make up a global mindset, including the ability to work and communicate effectively in a variety of cultures and languages, and the capacity to grasp the interdependence of nations in a global economy.

“International exposure challenges the way people see, the way they think, the things they see,” says Randy Dunham, a UW management professor who chaired the task force. “If you only think domestically, you’re more limited in your own choices and, ultimately, you limit the vision of the firm or company you work for.”

However, for some students, success in the job market—while a welcome byproduct—isn’t the only reason to enhance their global competence. Recently, the Gallup Organization released findings that those who see themselves as global citizens most often also feel a need to “give back to society” and “work for the rights of others.” They also demonstrate a willingness to grapple with complex issues that may present more than one solution—qualities we’ll need as our reach, and our challenges, expand.

Whatever a student’s motivation, though, gaining a global education in any major at UW–Madison is easier than ever.

“Study abroad really can be an affordable option for students,” says Matt Geisler, assistant director of International Academic Programs (IAP), the largest and central study-abroad office on campus. “In terms of cost comparisons, many of our programs are comparable to the cost of attendance at the UW. It is also important to note that students are eligible to use federal financial aid toward the costs of programs, and they have the opportunity to apply for scholarships specifically designated for use toward study-abroad program costs.”

IAP awards both merit-based and financial-need-based scholarships and travel grants; in 2008-9, the office awarded more than $500,000 to students. If your student wants to explore studying abroad, encourage him or her to attend an IAP financial aid session or meet with the IAP financial specialist to discuss options.

Students should begin planning for study abroad ear-
Second-Year Housing Options

As early as October, many students begin to feel pressure from friends about where to live next fall. Often, this happens because some campus-area property owners begin advertising fall 2010 vacancies at this time. Students mistakenly think that if they don’t make a decision in November, there will be “nothing left.” That is simply not true. Encourage your student to take his or her time and be thoughtful in making this important decision.

Consider staying on campus. There are many benefits to living in the University Residence Halls. Returning students have the privilege of choosing exactly which hall, floor, and room they will live in. In addition to academic initiatives, University Residence Halls offer dining facilities featuring fresh, nutritious meals, and resume-boosting employment opportunities. Included in the room rate are high speed (100 mbps) internet connections with unlimited bandwidth, cable TV with premium channels including the Big 10 Network HD, and all utilities; services typically billed separately in off-campus facilities. Information about selecting rooms for 2010-11 is available in late fall, along with Open Houses that offer students a chance to visit other buildings and learn about different residence hall communities, explore single room options, and meet the staff. Even though the process kicks off before winter break, University Housing contracts are not due until the spring semester, giving your student plenty of time to make a decision.

Students who decide that on-campus living is not a fit for them will find that there are many campus area housing options available to students, including: apartments, houses, and rooms in privately-owned residence halls, co-ops, and private homes. UW–Madison’s online Campus Area Housing Listing Service offers a consolidated and searchable list of campus area rentals along with other important housing-related information.

We encourage you to discuss housing options with your student to help him or her make an informed decision. Factors to consider include: rent prices, lease terms, location, utilities, furnishings, pets, parking, and meal plans.

For some students, living in an environment that provides live-in staff may be the best fit. In that case, learning about properties that participate in UW–Madison’s new Private Housing Connections (PHC) Program would be a good next step. The PHC program links property owners and their staff to the campus so they may better connect their student tenants to campus resources. For other students, sharing an apartment or house with several friends, or renting a room in the home of a local family, could be a better match.

At one time there was a shortage of adequate rental housing near campus. A construction boom in recent years has resulted in more housing spaces than there are students to fill them. Despite the addition of hundreds of new rental units, many students continue to feel pressure to make a decision as early as October.
to sign leases in November based largely upon historic trends that no longer apply. Although some housing units are advertised as early as November, the greatest selection and choice exists December through February. Students are encouraged to wait until after winter break to sign a lease unless they’re set on a particular building and/or have a large number of roommates to accommodate. Those who sign leases early are more likely to overpay or find themselves in unfavorable roommate situations.

All aspects of independent living should be carefully considered. Once a lease is signed it is a legal and binding contract. Students who later change their minds may find themselves stuck in a living arrangement that doesn’t fit or, worse, paying rent for a place they don’t occupy.

For more information about housing options visit the Parent Program Web site and select “Housing.”

H1N1 Update: Campus Rises to the Challenge

UW–Madison had prepared for the possibility that the fall semester would include an outbreak of the 2009 H1N1 influenza virus, based on predictions by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nonetheless, it was a little surprising when record numbers of students with flu symptoms began contacting University Health Services (UHS) during the very first week of classes.

During the first three weeks, more than 700 students—most under age 25—were evaluated by UHS for flu-like symptoms, and the H1N1 virus was indicated in most cases. Approximately 85 percent lived in off-campus housing and 15 percent in the residence halls.

“It started earlier than anyone had anticipated,” says Sarah Van Orman, executive director of UHS and chair of the campus committee on pandemic influenza planning. “Fortunately, many people already knew what they could do to help during an outbreak, and they sprang into action.”

University Housing has asked parents to take students home to recuperate if they lived within driving distance, and staff have stocked surgical masks and set up rooms to isolate students waiting to be picked up.

“Parents have been wonderful about coming to collect their students,” says Van Orman.

For students who live too far away, University Housing has provided rooms where they can recover until they are fever-free, as well as light meals, including Jell-O and Popsicles for sore throats and feverish heads.

As the outbreak began, other campus units activated their own preparedness plans, taking steps such as cleaning bathrooms, elevator buttons, and doorknobs more often. Faculty encouraged students to stay away from class if they were sick, and departments mobilized back-up plans for sick instructors. Students received detailed communications about lowering their own risk of getting sick, such as frequent hand-washing and covering coughs.

UHS activated its “surge plan,” extending hours during which medical advice was offered by phone during evenings and weekends, and briefly suspending certain nonurgent appointments.

“We continue to see all types of injuries and illnesses,” says Van Orman. “Even though flu is affecting a lot of people, we’re also seeing a lot of students with strep throat, bronchitis, and upper-respiratory infections—all the usual things that happen at this time of year.

“Many people recover from influenza just fine without medical treatment, and many students are experiencing a mild to moderate illness and not contacting us at all,” she adds. “But some of the students are very
sick, and some have medical conditions that put them at a higher risk of complications. So we have to make sure there are resources available for them.”

During the third week of the semester, fewer students called UHS about flu symptoms, and that number dropped further in each of the next three weeks.

However, Van Orman says, “It is too early to pronounce the outbreak over. We know that influenza often comes in waves.”

The next challenge will be vaccination. UHS has registered for large supplies of H1N1 vaccine and plans to hold clinics in Memorial Union, the SERF, and the Natatorium in order to vaccinate the most students within the shortest amount of time. The first clinic is scheduled for November 3, pending availability of vaccine.

Unfortunately, the university can’t control when the vaccine will arrive or how much it receives at a time.

In mid-October, UHS received a limited shipment of 2,500 doses. Following the CDC and State of Wisconsin instructions, they first vaccinated health-care workers.

“In an outbreak, this is an important practice,” says Van Orman. “You want to make sure the health-care workers are vaccinated first so they can’t accidentally pass along the flu to those they are caring for.”

With the remaining doses, UHS has begun vaccinating students with medical conditions that put them at a higher risk of complications should they get the flu.

“UW–Madison students and parents should really be commended for the steps they have taken so far to contain the outbreak as much as possible,” says Van Orman. “Now, with a little flexibility and patience, we’ll get through this part too.” For complete details about influenza on campus, go to flu.wisc.edu.

Did you know?
The Office of the Registrar has recently made the UW Course Guide available online. Students, faculty, advisors, and the public have access to this new tool. It allows students to find courses and related information and to plan for future semesters. It offers official course information, and links to the Schedule of Classes and department Web sites. Students can browse by course, title, instructor, subject, and school/college. In addition, students can create and save lists of favorite courses and semester plans as well as research textbook information. Visit Course Guide at mycourseguide.wisc.edu.

Transportation: Home for Thanksgiving
This year Thanksgiving falls on Thursday, November 26. Please keep in mind that classes will be held on Wednesday, November 25. Your student should plan on attending classes on Wednesday, unless his or her instructor announces that class has been cancelled. Listed below are some travel options available for students as they travel home for the holiday.

Traveling by bus
• Badger Bus offers service to Milwaukee and Minneapolis with stops along the way. It picks up in front of Memorial Union and at Kelly’s Market on W. Washington Avenue: www.badgerbus.com
• The Better Bus LLC offers direct service from UW–Madison to the Twin Cities. www.betterbus.com
• Greyhound Bus Lines services the Twin Cities, including the Minneapolis–St. Paul Airport, as well as the Chicago area. www.greyhound.com
• Mad-Bus transports from Madison to the Twin Cities. www.mad-bus.com
• Mega Bus offers low-cost fares from Madison to Minneapolis and to Chicago. www.megabus.com
• Van Galder Bus Company picks up at the Memorial Union and makes stops in Janesville, Beloit, Rockford, the Chicago Amtrak Station, Midway Airport, and O’Hare. www.coachusa.com/vangalder

Traveling by air
• The Dane County Regional Airport is about seven miles from campus and services multiple airlines. To get to the airport, students should utilize one of the local taxi services: Madison Taxi (800-894-3855), Badger Cab Company (608-256-5566), and Union Cab (608-242-2000).
• For expanded flight options, consider Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport, Chicago O’Hare Airport, Chicago Midway Airport, or the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. All are accessible by bus.

Staying in Madison
University Residence Halls remain open for students staying in Madison during Thanksgiving recess. The Residence dining rooms will be closed Thursday, Friday,
and Saturday, November 26–28 so it is important that students plan ahead and utilize other dining options on those days.

**Campus Offices to Close for Furlough Days**

Wisconsin’s 2009–11 budget mandates that state employees take eight mandatory furlough days during each budget year. Four of the eight days will be accomplished by closing the UW–Madison campus (with the exception of critical services such as patient care, animal care, police, power plant, and housing).

Other campus units, including the Parent Program, Student Financial Aid, the Dean of Students office, and the Bursar, will be closed on the following four days this academic year:

- Friday, November 27 (the day after Thanksgiving)
- Wednesday, December 30 (the day before New Year’s Eve)
- Friday, April 2, 2010 (the last day of spring recess)
- Friday, May 21, 2010 (the last day of the academic year)

The remaining four days each year will be selected at the discretion of individual employees and their supervisors. Care is being taken to minimize disruption to instruction and student services during those additional days.

The state has agreed with UW–Madison’s request to exempt all student employees, such as student hourly employees, teaching assistants, program/project assistants, and research assistants, from the furlough requirements. For more information, visit budget.wisc.edu.

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**Career Corner**

**Informational Interviewing: A Networking Tool**

Regardless of your student’s year in school, informational interviewing is an effective method for exploring career options and for networking to secure a job after graduation.

Informational interviewing doesn’t mean asking for a job or cold-calling executives. Instead, an informational interview is designed to allow a student to seek information and advice about a job, industry, or organization from someone working in the field.

You can help your student to pursue informational interviewing. We recommend that students start with people they already know, such as friends, relatives, former or present co-workers, and supervisors. Sharing your professional contacts with your student is a great starting point. Once your student has arranged an informational interview (we suggest that students keep interviews to 20–30 minutes), you can help prepare a list of questions your student can ask at the interview.

First impressions do count, so remind your student that professional attire is appropriate. Your student should arrive for the scheduled interview 10 minutes early. Tell your student that he or she should be prepared to answer questions such as: Why are you interested in this kind of work? What interests you about this industry or organization?

Lastly, after the informational interview, your student should follow up by thanking the professional via e-mail or a letter.

— Kristina Vack and Jennifer Buelow, College of Letters & Science Career Services
Making the transition to independent living and college life takes time—sometimes more time than students imagine. During this gradual process of adjustment, it’s normal for first-year students to experience homesickness. For some, it comes early in the first semester; for others, it occurs later on.

As a parent, you may feel the urge to get involved directly. In most cases, the best thing you can do is to step into your role as coach and mentor. Help your student overcome homesickness by encouraging him or her to work through it. Here are some tips to help you support your homesick student:

- Actively listen and be reassuring. Let your student know that he or she is not alone in feeling this way. Many students, including those who are outgoing and confident, struggle with this adjustment, but they may not be talking to other students about it. Tell your student that you love him or her, are proud, and that you know things will get better and he or she will succeed at college.
- Encourage your student to get involved. UW–Madison boasts more than 750 student organizations on campus as well as numerous job opportunities. Joining student organizations, volunteering, or getting a job are great ways to meet new friends and form social networks. For more information about ways to get involved, go to www.parent.wisc.edu and select “out of class learning”.
- If your student lives in University Housing, encourage him or her to seek out a House Fellow. House Fellows are upper-class students who have training and experience in supporting students who are homesick. They care about how students are feeling and will point students towards campus resources that can help, including opportunities to get involved.
- Decorate! If your student hasn’t done so already, he or she can make a room feel more like home by putting up photos, notes, or other items from home. Having a personal space that reminds him or her of home can provide comfort in this new setting.
- If you do not see progress after a short while or are unsure how else to be supportive, encourage your student to contact the University Health Services Counseling Services, which is an excellent and confidential resource. If your son or daughter has urgent mental health concerns the service offers 24–hour crisis intervention services by calling 608-265-5600.

For additional information about this topic please contact the Parent Program.

First-Year Parents’ Weekend

We look forward to seeing many of you return to campus November 13–15 for First-Year Parents’ Weekend (FPW), hosted by the Wisconsin Alumni Association. Be sure to join us at the Parent Reception following the question-and-answer session with Chancellor Biddy Martin. We invite you to connect with other first-year parents and talk with UW–Madison staff while enjoying refreshments and entertainment.

To register, and for a comprehensive list of events taking place during First-Year Parents’ weekend, visit www.uwalumni.com/fpw, or call 888-WIS-ALUM.